Applegate Valley Historical Society
15050 Hwy 238
CPO Box 3122
Applegate, Oregon 97530

MAY 2005 Newsletter

I want to "Thank" Fred & Martha Straube for this month's history letter. Anyone that has a story to tell can submit it to me at any time. You can also send it to me via e-mail. My address is; lovekoalas@peoplepc.com

Hope this finds everyone enjoying the spring weather that we are having. Here in Applegate, we have had quite a bit of rain, which makes all the grass grow, and everything nice and green. Yes, that makes more work at keeping things under control.

The museum grounds look very nice. Peggy has done a great job.

The Myrtle Krouse rose is in bloom right now. If you have a chance, stop and take a look at it.

The museum display is set up as an old cabin and if you have something that could be displayed, let Peggy know.

Our next meeting will be Saturday May 21 at 10:00 AM at the museum. Remember your chair.

This month is the 8th anniversary of the opening of the museum. We opened on May 10, 1997.

We have made up a postcard for the museum that is for sale for $2.00. It has a picture of the museum and flowers in bloom. It is very colorful. We hope to do some more postcards later, maybe a verity of different places in Applegate. We will keep you up to date on it.

Again the meeting is Saturday May 21st at 10:00 AM at the Museum.

See you there with your chair.

AVHS Sect. / Tres.
Barbara Niedermeyer
lovekoalas@peoplepc.com
541-846-7635

Applegate Valley Historical Society
15050 Hwy 238
CPO Box 3122
Applegate, Oregon 97530

MAY 2005 Newsletter

These articles ran in the Conservationist which is a newsletter for the Jackson Soil & Water Conservation District in September/ October 2004 and Spring 2005.

Long Road Home
Fred Straube's Family Branch
By Fred & Martha Straube

Article 1– Howdy, friends and neighbors! We are starting this first issue with a short article on how the Straube family got to the Rogue Valley.

John M. Straube was born in Saxony, in 1823. He crossed the sea when quite young. When he grew up, he traveled nearly everywhere in the U.S. He was a carpenter by trade, although he also mined for gold in California. He married Christina Stark when he was 31, and they traveled up through northern California, where she gave birth to Charles in 1857, Adolph in 1859, and Emil in 1861. Fredrick was born in Central Point in 1869.

In 1866, John moved his family to Canyon Creek, looking for gold. Later he became a freight wagon driver. His route took him through Central Point and in 1867, he took a homestead off Old Stage Road, about 3 miles from Gold Hill. Here he ran cattle, hogs, and raised grain and started a vineyard.

It is said he had a horrible temper, and drove his sons off with his abusive attitude. Two of his sons, Emil and Adolph, went to Mitchell, in eastern Oregon, where they went to work herding sheep. Indians were constantly attacking, so the boys would climb up trees to sleep at night. They had nowhere to spend their wages, so at the end of their three-year contract, they each had a thousand dollars, out of $1080.00 they had received as wages. With this, they bought property at Waterman Flats, nearby. There they raised and trained many horses, which they shipped to Los Angeles, and had around 250 head of cattle. At one point, it took two box carloads of cattle to pay the taxes.

The only one who would put up with his father was Fredrick. John M. Straube passed away from tuberculosis when Fredrick was 18. Fredrick continued farming, later hiring Sophia Clark to care for his aging mother. They eventually married, when he was 39. They had John William (Bill), Adolph Louis (Louis), and Lola Mae. Just before the Great

Depression hit the Rogue Valley, Fredrick bought a 215-acre ranch in the Upper Applegate Valley, about three miles from McKee Bridge, which is where the irrigation ditch starts. Due to the rocky soil, the water rights allotted were the largest in the state. The ranch included 700 head of sheep and 200 turkeys. He eventually sold the sheep and turkeys, and began milking cows. In 1940, he began selling milk to Camp White. This was the most profitable thing he ever did. Bill and Louis began helping at an early age, and soon were doing most of the work. Bill, however, was not cut out for farming, and went on with other endeavors, including lumber mills and A & W Root Beer franchises. Lola Mae inherited 80 acres of the original homestead off Tolo Road, where she and her husband Ray Vogal still have a dairy, run by David Wolff.

Louis married Luetta West, one of 12 children of Maggie and Joe West, and had two kids....me, Fred, and 9 years later my brother Robert (Bob). Dad milked cows, and raised silage corn and alfalfa from 1940 to 2002. The ranch sold at that time. I worked at the ranch milking cows from 1952 until 1998. I also had my own ranch across the river, where I ran Hereford cows and calves on pasture and open range. In 1998, my wife Martha and I were involved in a horrible auto accident, which left the driver of the other vehicle dead, and me in ICU for two months, with massive injuries, which have left me in a wheel chair. My ranch sold while I was in ICU, and Martha and our kids moved us to my Grandparents, Maggie & Joe West, old property above Buncom, which we had bought in 1996. We still run cattle on pasture and Forest Service permits, along with a show lamb program that is doing quite well.

Article 2—Long Road Home: Fred Straube's Family Branch (continued from last issue)

This is the next segment in the story we began last issue about the Straube family and what happened to the ranch.

I will begin with my grandfather, Fred Straube. Great Grampa died when Grampa was 18 years old, leaving him the farm at Willow Springs, north of Central Point. Grampa farmed about 75 acres of dry land, growing oats, barley, and wheat. He diverted Willow Creek and Jackson Creek onto a seven acre field and was able to keep it green all summer. This beautiful sight was one of the forces driving him to find an irrigated ranch. It would be several years before he found one.

In the fall, after harvest, Grampa would load the wagon with wheat and drive the team to the Butte Creek Mill in Eagle Point. Others waited for their own wheat to be ground into flour. But it was a long drive over and back and there were chores to do, so trading the wheat for flour was quicker.

A neighbor, Emmett Thompson, and Grampa raised a lot of pigs in the oak-covered hills behind the ranch, clear to Galls Creek. The sows farrowed out there and raised their litters on the abundant crops of acorns, where they got fat. In the fall, the pigs were gathered, put in pens, and fed grain. Although they were fat, the acorns made the meat taste bad. The pigs were fed for about six weeks on corn, barley, and skim milk from the milk cows. Then

Grampa and Mr. Thompson would drive 90 or so head to the railroad in Gold Hill and put them in pens. Grampa worried they wouldn't be able to tell the two owners' pigs apart. But he soon found if they left the pigs alone, the pigs would separate into two bunches and the count was always right.

The Straube family also raised 12-14 hogs for themselves. When it was butchering time, all the neighbors got together and helped with all the work. They would render the lard, usually getting 30-40 gallons. Everyone would eat the little bits of crispy fat that would float to the top, thinking it a real treat. Sausage was cooked and canned or placed in big crocks and melted lard poured over it to cover the meat deeply. Hog jowls, shoulders, hams and bacon were hung in the old smokehouse and fires were kept burning 24 hours a day for the first several weeks. Then fires were lit just during the day, until the meat was cured. The smokehouse was 12 X 12 X 10 feet tall. The meat hung in two layers and wasn't allowed to touch. Grampa took a lot of pride in his smoked hams and sold many to neighbors who didn't raise pigs. Unfortunately, there were other neighbors who didn't raise pigs, yet seemed to have a lot of pork meat all the time. Then their friends were having pork chops regularly, and THEIR friends... So Grampa eventually quit raising pigs for everybody else.

Grampa always had 6-8 cows, and sold cream. My Dad was fond of Jersey cows, and saved his money to buy a registered Jersey heifer. She cost $30.00 and came from Drain, Oregon, on the train. Grampa decided to buy some 2-year-old bred registered Jerseys from Oregon City to increase the herd. They cost $70.00.

In 1929, Grampa bought the ranch in the Applegate. Gus Newberry, the previous owner, had proven that he needed 4" of water per acre because it was so sandy and rocky. The water just sank. That gave him one of the largest water rights in the state.

Grampa moved his family to the ranch as soon as Dad graduated from high school. Dad was 16, and it was 1930, the beginning of the Great Depression. The first order of things was to start improving the fields and cleaning the irrigation ditches. The fields had been planted to alfalfa years before, but were pretty well run out. The 700 head of sheep that came with the ranch kept it mowed flat. As the ditches were repaired and cleaned and the fields became properly irrigated, water would run underground and flow back into the river the full length of the ranch. Grampa wanted to keep planting grain, which he would feed to the milk cows. Dad wanted to plant alfalfa, since it grew such huge crops of hay. He was able to convince Grampa and began planting most of the ranch. The drawback to this was the sheep. As things got lush and green, they would begin to scour. A neighbor, Ben Dawson, up in the dry area around Steamboat wanted the sheep and traded 14 dairy heifers for a bunch of them. Once off the rich grass, they quit scouring and thrived.

Grampa and Dad increased the dairy herd and sold cream. The milk was separated and the cream went into 10-gallon cans, which sat in a vat with creek water running through it to keep it icy cold. At 6 AM, the cream cans were hauled to Ruch, where a truck from Del Norte picked them up. When World War II started the Army needed milk. Camp White sent 5 men out to inspect everything with critical eyes. As the war progressed and shortages began to occur, the inspectors became far less critical and eventually quit coming at all. They just wanted milk. This contract was the thing that made the ranch the most profit.

After the war, the local dairy farmers were left with no market. They got together and contracted a truck to haul the milk to Eugene. Grampa and Dad milked into a 400-gallon tank, which was picked up every other day.

The Jersey herd began testing positive for Brucellosis. The State Veterinarian branded them with an S on their jaw. Grampa eventually got undulant fever, probably from the un-pasteurized milk, and became very ill. After he finally recovered, Gramma would use a small pasteurizer for his milk. The rest of the family still drank it raw. The cows were sold, and they bought another herd to replace it. Later on, this herd also came down with Brucellosis, and were sold. They were able to buy a group of vaccinated heifers, Holsteins this time, and started again. They eventually got up to 80 cows, and went to a 1000-gallon tank.

Grampa did not believe in buying grain and hay for the cows. He felt you should raise it, then all the profit was yours. He sprinkled molasses on the rained-on-hay, grew corn for silage, and used everything they produced. Dad, however, wanted to expand, and the two knocked heads a lot. Dad figured if they could just grow alfalfa, they would not be plowing so often and he wouldn't have to pick rocks. Dad hated that job, and said he always got stuck with it. The ranch had tons of rocks, all sizes, mostly 8—12" across that worked up in the fields every time they were plowed.

Mom and Dad both farmed the fields with teams of horses. Gramma babysat me, and Mom worked as hard as any other field hand mowing, planting or harvesting the crops. She helped gather cattle in the mountains, galloping full speed down slopes that would scare the man from Snowy River to death. At the end of the day, she put on her apron, and fixed huge meals for the hired men, then cleaned, got food ready for the next day, and did Mom stuff. Nobody thought a thing of her working like she did. However, none of the men ever helped with the inside stuff.

The horses gave way to tractors, and soon there was a tractor for this, and a tractor for that, a skid steer, a backhoe, and nobody to do all the work. Now that the ranch is sold, the upper half in grapes, the lower half in grain. Hmmm, maybe Grampa wasn't so far off as they thought....